



International Day of Climate Action 2022 was commemorated in an event jointly organized by WHO and the Air Quality and Climate Change Research Center of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences on 24 October in Tehran. 21 November 2022 – As a developing country with a diverse climate, Islamic Republic of Iran faces many climate-related challenges. At this year's International Day of Climate Action, WHO, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and other relevant government organizations gathered together to explore the avenues to mitigate the health impacts of climate change.

With about 80% of the country having arid or semi-arid climate, the Islamic Republic of Iran is faced with numerous climate hazards, including heat stress, drought, and air pollution, which carry serious implications for public health. It is predicted that, at current emission rates, exposure to heat stress and the frequency of heat waves will increase, putting a greater number of the population at risk for heat-related mortality and morbidity, especially older people. Increased temperature and drought could also compromise food security and safety, increasing the risk of development of malnutrition and incidence of foodborne diseases and diet-related noncommunicable diseases.

Climate change is also associated with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as riverine and coastal flooding. These events can lead to population displacement and affect water and sanitation infrastructure and services and contaminate water with faecal bacteria (e.g. *E. coli*, salmonella) from runoff or sewer overflow. As an example of impacts due to drought, it is expected that surface water runoff will decrease by 25% by 2030. In terms of air pollution, factors contributing to climate change are also major sources of air pollution. All major cities in Islamic Republic of Iran have pollutant levels significantly above those recommended by WHO. In 2016, there were more than 27 000 deaths due to ambient air

pollution in the country.

The International Day of Climate Action is a global movement to unite the world in addressing the climate crisis. This year's International Day of Climate Action was observed in an event jointly organized by the WHO country office in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Air Quality and Climate Change Research Center of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences on 24 October in Tehran.

During the commemoration, Dr Mikiko Senga, Deputy Representative and Health Emergencies and Universal Health Coverage Lead at the WHO country office, presented health impacts of climate change with a focus on the country and elaborated on joint international and national initiatives. The event was attended by high-level officials from the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, the Department of Environment, and other relevant governmental organizations.



Dr Mikiko Senga, Deputy Representative and Health Emergencies and Universal Health Coverage Lead at the WHO country office, presented on health impacts of climate change during International Day of Climate Action. Officials from the Air Quality and Climate Change Research Center, the Center for Environmental and Occupational Health, the National Climate Change Center of the Department of Environment, Water Resources of the Ministry of Energy, and Tehran University of Medical Sciences gave technical presentations and held discussions.

The presentations drew attention to climate change concerns as the main health threat to human life, including death and illness caused by increasingly frequent extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, storms and floods, the disruption of food systems, increases in food, water- and vector-borne diseases, and mental health issues.

Islamic Republic of Iran has been an advocate for international climate action for decades and has been part of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1996. Since then, a number of organizations and offices have been established to implement climate programmes within the government. For example, the National Climate Change Office in 1998, led by the Department of Environment. Also, there is a National Committee on Health and Climate Change within the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

The Ministry of Health took part in the development of the first, second and third reports on nationally determined contributions (health sections) and contributed to the UNFCCC-WHO health and climate change national profiles (2015 and 2022).

After the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education was committed to developing climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems and, in collaboration with WHO, conducted national programmes to address climate change and health. These programmes include conducting vulnerability assessments in 6 provinces and recommending strategic direction for adaptation, assessing climate resilience and environmental sustainability in 267 health care facilities in the same 6 provinces, conducting a baseline WASH assessment in 730 health care facilities throughout the country, and estimating carbon footprint of health care facilities in the country (ongoing).



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